

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9582

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK

SUBJECT: LABOR RETAINS MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT

REF: LONDON 3380

1. LABOR PARTY HELD ITS COVENTRY SEAT IN MARCH 4 BY-
ELECTION BY 3,700 VOTE MARGIN, ENSURING THAT LABOR GO-
VERNMENT WILL RETAIN ITS ONE-SEAT OVERALL MAJORITY IN
HOUSE OF COMMONS FOR TIME BEING AT LEAST. LIBERAL AND
ALL FRINGE CANDIDATES FAILED TO GET REQUIRED 12.5 PERCENT
OF VOTE AND LOST THEIR DEPOSITS. OUTCOME REVEALED OVER-
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ALL SWING OF FIVE PERCENT TO CONSERVATIVES, JUST HALF OF WHAT WAS REQUIRED FOR THEM TO WIN SEAT. TORY PERFORMANCE. WHEN JUDGED IN CONTEXT OF BRITAIN'S CURRENT ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT, CONTINUING (ALBEIT AT DIMINISHING RATE) INFLATION AND RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF FUTURE SPENDING CUTS, WAS DISAPPOINTING FOR THEM. NET SWING TO CONSERVATIVES WAS ACTUALLY LESS THAN THAT REGISTERED IN LAST YEAR'S WOOLWICH BY-ELECTION IN WHICH CONSERVATIVES TOOK LABOR SEAT. KEY TO LABOR VICTORY, IN OUR JUDGEMENT, WAS UNUSUALLY HIGH VOTER TURN OUT, 72.9 PERCENT. THIS COMPARES WITH 75.2 PERCENT TURN OUT IN COVENTRY AT OCTOBER 1974 GENERAL ELECTION.

2. NEWLY ELECTED LABOR MP GEOFFREY ROBINSON WILL REPORTEDLY TAKE HIS SEAT MARCH 9. PRESS IS IMPRESSED BY ROBINSON AND HIS OBVIOUS ABILITY, AS ARE MOST OTHER OBSERVERS, AND IS ALREADY TOUTING HIM FOR JUNIOR MINISTERIAL POST.

3. COMMENT: WILSON GOVERNMENT AND LABOR PARTY ARE HEARTENED BY VICTORY IN COVENTRY. AND MUCH OF THE CREDIT MUST GO TO ROBINSON AND COVENTRY ORGANIZATION WHICH WAS ABLE TO BRING OUT THE VOTERS. CONSERVATIVES, AS INDICATED ABOVE, MUST BE DISAPPOINTED. THOUGH WE ANTICIPATE THEY WILL TRY TO PUT BEST FACE ON RESULT. CITING SWING AS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF POPULAR OPPOSITION TO GOVERNMENT AND ITS POLICIES. OUTCOME OF COVENTRY RACE, MOREOVER, SUGGESTS THAT BOTH THE WIRRAL AND CARSHALTON SEATS NOW HELD BY TORIES CAN BE REGARDED AS SAFE IN NEXT WEEK'S BY-ELECTIONS. LIBERALS HAD STAKED CONSIDERABLE PRESTIGE ON COVENTRY BY-ELECTION AND HAVE BEEN DAMAGED BY RESULT. IT CERTAINLY WILL NOT HELP JEREMY THORPE IN HIS EFFORT TO RETAIN PARTY LEADERSHIP.

ARMSTRONG

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